Plagiarism exercise

Look at the original text in the boxes¹, and then the samples based on the original. Discuss whether the students’ writing samples are paraphrases or summaries, or some form of plagiarism. If so, what kind of plagiarism is it, and how serious is it? How could it be fixed?

1. Example #1a – excerpt from original journal article

In South Korea, the site of our research project, there is a conscious effort to provide equal educational opportunities for secondary school children (Seth, 2002). Students who reside in a specific local education district are allocated to a school within the district through a lottery system, and teachers, vice-principals, and principals in state schools are rotated within their provincial or metropolitan (not just local) education district, usually every four years.

Example #1b – student writing sample

In South Korea, there is a conscious effort to provide equal educational opportunities for secondary school children. Students in each district are assigned to a school in the district through a lottery system; teachers, principles and vice-principals in state schools are rotated among schools throughout the entire metropolitan area, usually every four years.

Example #1c – second student writing sample

In South Korea, students are randomly assigned to a school in their district, and teachers are regularly rotated among schools throughout the metropolitan area (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008).

2. Example #2a – original.

...However, these studies relied solely on teachers’ self-reports about how important they considered certain strategies and how often they used them; they were not based on documentation of the actual nature of the participating teachers’ motivational practice—which would have been more objective—nor on any classroom student behavior to which such practice might have been linked.

The current research aims to fill this gap by providing empirical data obtained in a large-scale investigation of 40 ESOL classrooms in South Korea, which involved more than 1,300 learners and examined the link between the teachers’ motivational teaching practice and their students’ language learning motivation. A novel feature of our study is that, in contrast to the usual practice of L2 motivation research, which relies on self-report questionnaires, our research paradigm includes a salient classroom observation component. For this purpose, we developed a new classroom

¹ The contents of this exercise are based on the following article:
In the current study, we set out to examine empirically how a teacher’s motivational teaching practice affects his or her students’ motivated learning behavior, as manifested by the amount of attention the students pay in class and the extent of their participation and volunteering in tasks. When we designed the study, we realized that the standard data gathering technique of L2 motivation research—namely, the administration of questionnaires—would not be sufficient to assess this process. We therefore decided to carry out a large-scale classroom observation study with a motivational focus, with the intention of producing generalizable results and of obtaining varied and rich quantitative data concerning both the teacher and the students. To this effect, we designed a highly structured observation scheme following the model of Spada and Fröhlich’s (1995) COLT. We supplemented this instrument with a student questionnaire and a teacher appraisal form.

At the beginning of the study, we faced an important decision: Should we visit each site more than once, or should we increase the sample size to the level that is appropriate to produce statistically significant results? The former option would have enhanced the picture we obtained of each class but would have reduced the number of L2 classes that we could include in our sample. Therefore, partly because we wanted to combine the observational data with a student survey, we chose the second option and included 40 learner groups in our study, with a student population of more than 1,300. It followed from such a design that, instead of focusing on the impact of specific strategies used by specific teachers, which would have required a more intensive and preferably longitudinal investigation, we focused on examining the quality of the teachers’ overall motivational teaching practice by generating a composite index of the rich observational data.

Example #2b – student writing

Finding past motivation studies based solely on questionnaire data inadequate, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) used a hybrid observational and survey study paradigm. They observed English classes at a number of secondary schools in Seoul, coded the teacher and student behavior, and administered questionnaires to the students. The authors deliberated between a more specific longitudinal study of a smaller number of subjects, or a more extensive study of a larger number of L2 classes based on one-time observations; they opted for the latter for a larger-scope study. However, there was no reason both approaches could not have been done for a two-part study – a large-scale study like the one reported, and a smaller, more detailed longitudinal study as a follow-up study.

3. Example #3a – original

Motivation is one of the most important concepts in psychology. Theories concerning motivation attempt to explain nothing less than why humans behave and think as they do. The notion is also of great importance in language education. Teachers and students commonly use the term to explain what causes success or failure in learning. Indeed, motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate second or foreign language (L2) learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. Without sufficient motivation, individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals. Similarly, appropriate curricula and good teaching are not enough on their own to ensure student achievement—students also need to have a modicum of motivation (for recent reviews, see Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, in press).
Theories of motivation attempt to explain nothing less than why humans behave and think as they do (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). The concept is also of important in language education, since teachers and students commonly use the term to explain what causes success or failure in learning. Motivation provides the primary force for beginning second or foreign language (L2) learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and difficult learning process. Without sufficient motivation, individuals with even the highest abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals. Similarly, appropriate curricula and good teaching are not enough on their own to ensure student achievement—students also need to have a modicum of motivation (for recent reviews, see Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, in press).

4. Example #4a – original

A principal component analysis confirmed our prediction because it yielded a one-factor solution (with the first factor having an eigenvalue of 1.8 that was twice as large as the eigenvalue of a possible second factor), which explained 60% of the total variance. Consequently, we used this factor score as the self-reported student motivation index.

Example #4b – student writing

A principal component analysis confirmed their prediction because it yielded a one-factor solution; this single factor score was decided upon as the self-reported student motivation index.

Example #4c – second student writing

The researchers reported the results of a factor analysis of the survey data, and concluded that one underlying factor (a general class motivation factor) was apparent from the survey data. However, they reported an eigenvalue of 1.8 for the first factor, being “twice as large as the eigenvalue of a possible second factor”, but a second factor of c. 0.9 could also be significant.

5. Example #5a – original

Traditionally, motivational psychologists have been more concerned about what motivation is than about how we can use this knowledge to motivate learners. Recently, however, more and more researchers have decided to examine the pedagogical implications of research by conceptualizing motivational strategies (for reviews in educational psychology, see, e.g., Brophy, 2004; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; within the area of language education, see, e.g., Alison & Halliwell, 2002; Dörnyei, 2001, 2006; Williams & Burden, 1997). Thus, motivation research has reached a level of maturity such that theoretical advances have started to inform methodological developments. This article has been written in that vein.
As Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) note, past psychologists often studied the characteristics of motivation itself, rather than for application to educational contexts such as motivating students. However, the latter area has begun to receive more attention in recent years, such that theoretical and research findings have been made of the type that also have more direct application for pedagogy. Some have examined its pedagogical implications in terms of motivational strategies (in educational psychology, e.g., Brophy, 2004; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; in language education, e.g., Alison & Halliwell, 2002; Dörnyei, 2001, 2006; Williams & Burden, 1997).

Past researchers have examined the implications of motivational strategies for teaching in educational psychology (see Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) for references).

Past researchers have examined the implications of motivational strategies for teaching in educational psychology (e.g., Brophy (2004) and others, as cited in Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008)).
Comments on Example 1

Example 1b is a serious example of plagiarism, on two counts: (1) the student has copied and pasted the wording with few changes, and (2) did not cite the original source; s/he is writing this as if these were his/her own words and ideas.

Example 1c shows better rewording, and is fortunately shorter than the original passage. However, s/he cited the information as if it were only from Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, but the information is actually from the Seth article that they cited. This should be cited as a secondary citation, i.e., the student should cite Seth as cited by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, if the original Seth article is unavailable, e.g., “…(Seth, 2002, as cited in Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008).” She could also simply leave out the Seth information and avoid the problem altogether, since this fact is not really informative or interesting. S/he also misspelled one instance of ‘principal’ – one should be careful about using sources correctly and accurately.

Comments on Example 2

The student has appropriately cited the original article, and has appropriately reworded and summarized the original passage. The summary is much shorter than the original; and only the details relevant to the student’s paper are included, and non-essential details have been omitted.

Comments on Example 3

Although the student cited the source in 3b, s/he has not attempted to paraphrase or summarize the information – much of the wording is the same. The last two sources (the Dörnyei and Ushioda articles mentioned in the last line) should be cited as secondary citations, or should be omitted. The writer of 3c has appropriately reworded the passage and provided appropriate source citation.

Comments on Example 4

The student in 4b simply copied from the original, with little attempt to change the wording (we’ll assume that it would be clear from the context that s/he is still citing the Guilloteaux and Dörnyei paper). Example 4c shows proper rewording of the original, plus the student writer’s critique of the researchers’ analysis – this shows very appropriate use of an original source; one should not just summarize what the researchers have said, but provide meaningful critique or comments on it. Note that technical terms like ‘principal component analysis’ usually cannot be paraphrased.

Comments on Example 5

In 5a, the student cited the source, but did not make enough changes in the wording – some phrases are the same as the original. Also, s/he has copied source citations from the original Guilloteaux and Dörnyei article – all the names from the fourth and fifth lines of the original should have been cited as secondary sources, or should have been omitted if they are not important for the student writer’s purposes. However, for multiple secondary sources like this, a more convenient method would be to do what the writers did in 5c and 5d. These last two examples also show appropriate summarizing – the original is distilled down to only the bare essentials, i.e., to only what would be relevant for the student’s paper.